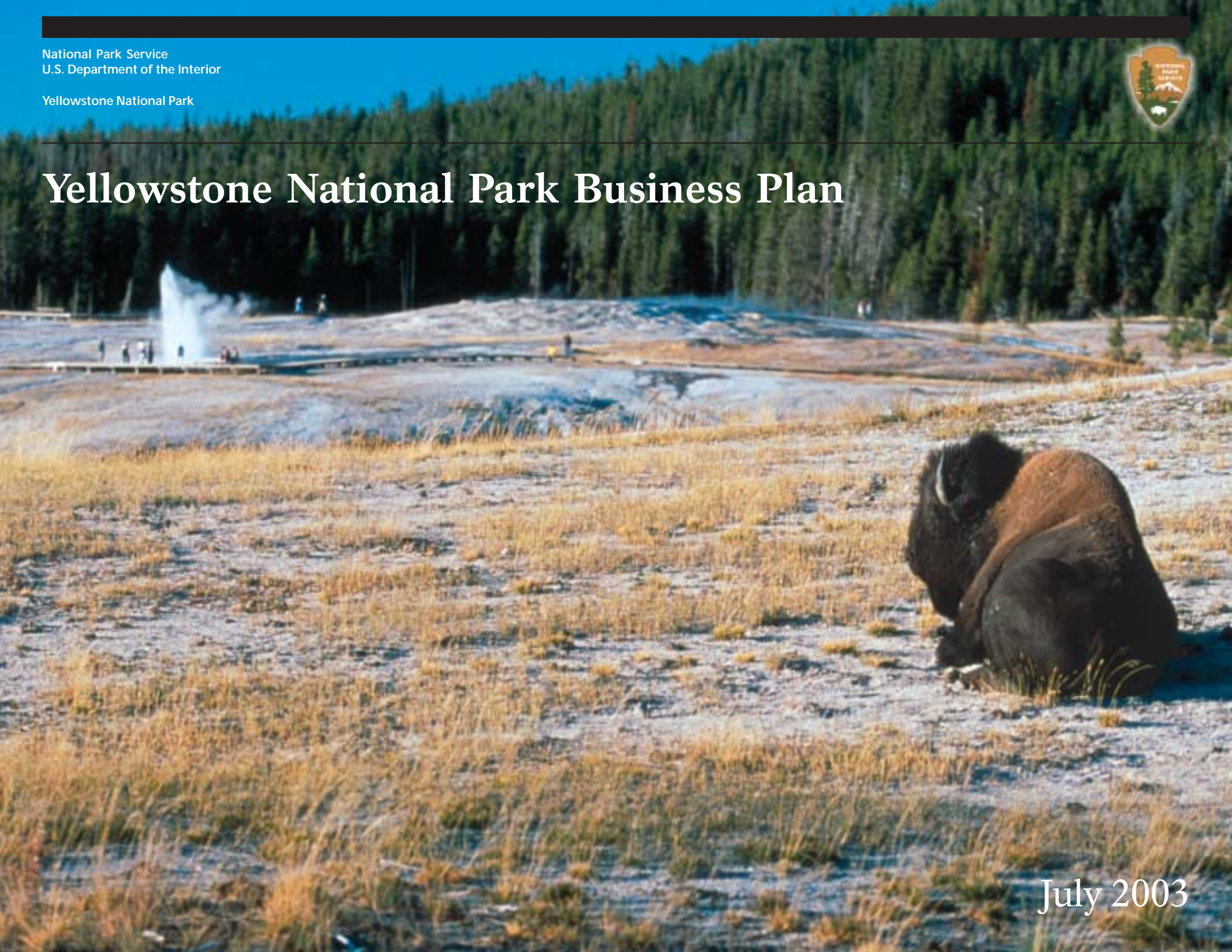


National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yellowstone National Park



Yellowstone National Park Business Plan



July 2003





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The National Park Service Act

Approved August 25, 1916

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
That there is hereby created in the Department of the Interior a service to be called the National Park Service...[which] shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.



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Yellowstone National Park
Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming

*All photos courtesy National Park Service
Photo Archives unless otherwise noted.*

Introduction

The purpose of business planning in the National Park Service (NPS) is to improve the abilities of parks to more clearly communicate their financial status with principal stakeholders. A business plan answers questions such as, “What is the business of this park unit?” and “How much funding and staff does this park need to operate within appropriate standards?” This plan summarizes the functional responsibilities, operational standards, and financial picture of the park.

The business planning process accomplishes three main tasks. First, it provides the park with a synopsis of its funding history. Second, it presents a clear, detailed picture of the state of current park operations and funding. Finally, it outlines park priorities and funding strategies.

All parks apply a common methodology when developing business plans. Park operations are organized into five functional areas that describe the business for which a park is responsible. The functional areas are then further broken down into 35 programs. This allows the park to report expenditures in terms of activities rather than fund sources, enabling it to communicate its financial situation to external audiences more clearly. Furthermore, using the same 35-program structure for all parks provides a measure of comparability across park units. This process is aided by the use of an Electronic Performance Support System, a web-based application that allows parks to complete the data collection, analysis, and document production with step-by-step instruction.

The business planning process not only results in a powerful communication tool, but also provides park managers with financial and operational baseline knowledge for future decision-making.



Yellowstone Lake encompasses an area of 136 square miles at an altitude of 7,730 feet, making it the largest high-elevation lake in North America.

Roger Anderson

Management Team Foreword

The National Park Service is responsible for the finest of our nation's treasures, many of which are found in Yellowstone National Park (YNP). People from around the world come to Yellowstone each year to experience the wonders of its unique geothermal features, herds of free-roaming wildlife, pristine waters, and remarkable mountain scenery.

As the stewards of this special place, we are charged with protecting its priceless resources. Park stewardship means much more than simply ensuring that park resources remain unimpaired for future generations. It means keeping the visitors who come to experience the park safe to the best of our ability; doing all we can to learn more about the resources we protect through research; using the best methods and innovations to maintain our trails and his-

toric buildings; complying with the requirements set forth in laws and mandates; and striving to educate and inspire the public through the messages we present in our interpretive programs, exhibits, and publications. We protect the park by understanding, every day, that Yellowstone is valuable not just for its tangible resources—that its value also lies in the intangible ideas it represents, and that formed the basis for the creation of the NPS's other 387 units.

In looking toward the future, we envision many ways to better protect our resources and visitors, increase the sustainability of infrastruc-

ture, and provide services and educational opportunities for visitors. Improving our ability to meet our mission may require additional funding—a demanding challenge under any circumstances, and especially during these difficult times. It is perhaps during such times, however, that our mission to protect places of beauty, wildness, and recreation becomes most crucial.

Our desire to be an NPS leader in responsible economic innovation and accountability has led us to engage in a private-sector approach to analyzing our way of doing business. As part of the business planning process that led to this document, we have re-visited our park mission and supporting goals and formulated parkwide priorities linking our future direction with our fundamental responsibilities. We are committed to developing pioneering approaches to more effectively meet the park's mission. Yellowstone has a rich history, a dedicated staff, and strong support from a variety of stakeholders, and together we pledge to explore new ways of ensuring that the park's fiscal future is based on sound information and effective planning.

This business plan explains our mission and goals, and the ways in which we support them with our everyday operations. More importantly, it examines our strategic plans for the future, and how we plan to move toward our goals in the next five years. Ultimately, we hope that this process will lead to operational enhancements that will both improve resource protection and help the public understand and appreciate the significance of Yellowstone, inspiring them to become lifelong partners in its preservation.

We invite you to explore the following pages to learn about what we do every day to provide our visitors with a beautiful, safe, and sustainable “wonderland.”



Yellowstone's Management Team, 2003. Left to right: Mona Divine, Frank Walker, Suzanne Lewis, John Varley, Diane Chalfant, Kathy Tustanowski-Marsh, John Sacklin, Marsha Karle, and Joanne Timmins.

Executive Summary

This plan is a measure of the financial and human resources required for Yellowstone to fulfill its mandates. It focuses on the costs of operating the park that can be changed—namely, priorities and strategies for increasing internal efficiencies and the overall effectiveness of park management. Some factors that influence costs cannot be changed, including:

- **Geography:** Encompassing 2.2 million acres, the park is nearly the size of Connecticut. It takes about three hours to drive the 95 miles between the park's North and South Entrances. The park's size and geographic isolation affect almost every aspect of its operations and activities, from maintaining roads to counting and classifying animals to patrolling the backcountry.
- **Responsibilities:** The park must comply with hundreds of laws, mandates, and training requirements affecting park operations. Implementation is sometimes simple, but can also prove time-consuming, expensive and, at times, contentious. Furthermore, the park is an area of exclusive federal jurisdiction. While some other parks may be able to rely on local/regional agencies for services such as law enforcement, road maintenance, or utilities, Yellowstone's personnel provide all these services for the park and, in some instances, for surrounding communities.
- **Visitor numbers and expectations:** As more people come to Yellowstone, particularly in fall and winter, the park's personnel are expected to provide more interpretive and safety services during a lengthening busy season.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2002, YNP spent \$41.7M on day-to-day Operations and Maintenance (O&M) and \$13.3M on one-time Investments. Since 1980, visitation has increased by 50%, yet the park's appropriated base funding has increased at a nominal (non-inflation adjusted) rate of 4.8%, which is 1.4% after adjusting for inflation. While the budget appears to have increased \$17.5M since FY80, the inflation-adjusted increase is actually \$3.4M.

Yellowstone does many things well. The park annually serves approximately three million visitors. Periodic surveys and a high volume of correspondence show that visitors' experiences are strongly positive. The park has been quite effective at protecting a wealth of resources (including approximately two-thirds of the world's geysers, 10,000 thermal features, 3,000 bison, 150 wolves, and nearly 380,000 museum objects) for the enjoyment of this and future generations. Park employees also perform maintenance and restoration on 466 miles of roads, 1,000 miles of trails, and some 710 of the park's 1,541 buildings.

To better meet our mission, several gaps must be bridged. We seek to develop a stronger research program for efficient and effective policymaking; be better able to meet standards for law enforcement, emergency medical response, and structural fire protection; provide more interpretive services, especially to the growing number of fall and winter visitors; streamline financial management and improve information technology; and invest in activities such as road reconstruction and fleet replacement to alleviate high repair costs, then follow these investments with a strong preventive maintenance program that will maximize the lifespan of the park's material assets.

The total O&M cost of bridging these gaps is estimated to be \$22.7M, including the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 271 employees. This deficit represents 35% of the required O&M budget (\$64.4M). Yellowstone's percentage of deficit is consistent with those identified by many other parks that have completed the same business planning process.

Yellowstone will do its part. In the final section of this plan, we identify and address our high-priority needs and identify new strategies for reducing costs and increasing revenue. The estimated benefit of these strategies is \$2.2M.

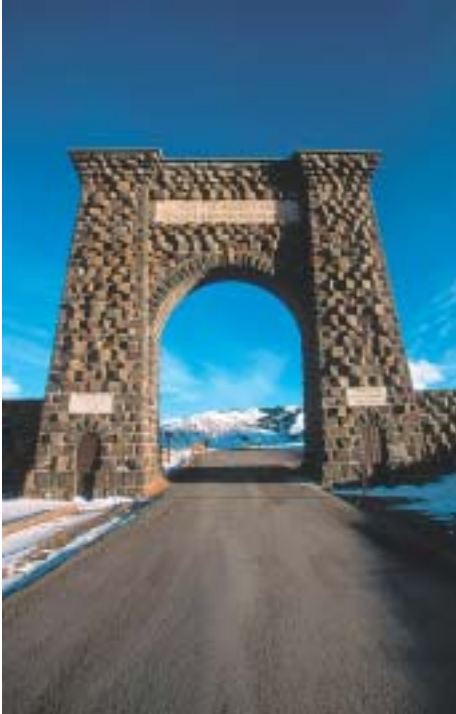


Visitor photo

Yellowstone contains the world's largest concentration of geysers. "Geyser-gazing" is a popular pastime among the park's three million annual visitors.

Park Overview

Park at a Glance



Language from the park's Organic Act is etched into the Roosevelt Arch, a classic symbol of the national park idea and first gateway to Yellowstone.

Geography

Established on March 1, 1872, Yellowstone National Park spans 2.2 million acres—an area roughly the size of Connecticut. Most of the park is located in the northwestern corner of Wyoming; a small portion overlaps Montana and Idaho. Five entrance stations provide access to the park by way of its 466 miles of roads. Visitor centers and museums are located at key points along the park boundary and the Grand Loop, Yellowstone's figure-eight shaped roadway.

The park is comprised primarily of a high, forested, volcanic plateau that is flanked on the north, east, and south by the northern Rocky Mountains. The Continental Divide traverses the park from its southeastern corner to its western boundary. Elevation averages 8,000 feet, ranging from 5,282 feet at the North Entrance to 11,358 feet at the summit of Eagle Peak.

Geologic Resources

Most of Yellowstone National Park lies within one of the world's largest volcanic calderas, which runs through the 20-mile-long Yellowstone Lake and encircles the park's major geyser basins. The volcano's last major eruption occurred approximately 640,000 years ago. Preserved within Yellowstone are some 10,000 thermal features, including the famous Old Faithful Geyser.

Natural Resources

Although the park was originally established to protect its unique thermal landscape, other aspects of the park have become equally important, as well as symbolic. An outstanding mountain wildland, Yellowstone is home to grizzly bears, gray wolves, and free-ranging herds of bison and elk. It is the core of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, one of the most fully-intact temperate zone ecosystems remaining on the planet. With but a few exceptions, the region appears to have retained or been restored to its full

historic complement of vertebrate wildlife species—something truly unique in the wildlands of the contiguous 48 states. The park's biological diversity reflects its habitat diversity, ranging from semi-arid sagebrush and high alpine areas to thermal basins, forests, meadows, and myriad other types. Yellowstone's streams and rivers connect these habitats and are an essential component of the ecosystem. The park's significance as a world treasure was officially recognized when it was designated an International Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site in 1976 and 1978, respectively.

Cultural Resources

The park's human history dates back more than 12,000 years. The legacy of how American Indians, generations of travelers, area residents, and park managers have used the park's natural and built landscape makes Yellowstone as distinctive culturally as it is naturally. The park contains nearly 1,000 historic structures, many of which are still used for visitor lodging, employee housing, and work spaces. The park is home to six designated National Historic Landmarks. Its historic structures and sites reflect the legacy of various periods of park administration and American history. The library and archives preserve a 131-year accumulation of records about park resources and administration. The museum collection is comprised of nearly 380,000 objects, including historic paintings, photographs, hotel furnishings, antique cars and stagecoaches, wildlife and herbarium specimens, and fossils.

Park Infrastructure

The park's infrastructure is extensive and widespread. Many of the park's facilities and services represent major capital investments that require considerable operational support on an ongoing basis. The unusually large scale of Yellowstone's infrastructure is an important consideration in the park's operation.

Park Management

Yellowstone is managed in seven distinct groups called divisions: Maintenance (49% of total park expenditures), Resource Management and Visitor Protection (23%), the Yellowstone Center for Resources (9%), Administration (7%), Business Management (4%), Interpretation (4%), and the Office of the Superintendent (4%). The operational categories in this plan differ slightly from these, instead reflecting the framework of organization by *function* used in all National Park Service business plans, allowing for comparison across park units.

Conservation Legacy

As the world's first national park, Yellowstone is often invoked as a symbol of the national park movement. Because of this visibility, the evolution of the park's management policies has influenced the history of conservation policy worldwide. Preserving resources for the enjoyment of this

and future generations is no simple task—and like other parks around the world, Yellowstone's approach to fulfilling this mission has adapted as scientific knowledge and social values have evolved.

Expressed through laws and mandates, society's expectations of Yellowstone and its managers have changed dramatically over the park's 131 years. Prominent examples of these changes include: the park's management of species and processes such as wolves, fire, and invasive exotics; its relationship with American Indians; and the growing importance of educating an increasingly urban public about ecological processes and their human influences.

The legacy of these changing social values is written on the land, both here in Yellowstone and in national parks around the world.

Enabling Legislation

Be it enacted...that the tract of land in the Territories of Montana and Wyoming lying near the head-waters of the Yellowstone River...is hereby reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale...and dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people...

That said public park shall be under the exclusive control of the Secretary of the Interior, whose duty it shall be to... provide for the preservation, from injury or spoliation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition... He shall provide against the wanton destruction of the fish and game found within said park, and against their capture or destruction for the purposes of merchandise or profit.
(17 Stat. 32, March 1, 1872)

Mission Statement

Preserved within Yellowstone National Park are Old Faithful and the majority of the world's geysers and hot springs. An outstanding mountain wildland, with clean water and air, Yellowstone is home of the grizzly bear and wolf and free-ranging herds of bison and elk. Centuries-old sites and historic buildings that reflect the unique heritage of America's first national park are also protected. Yellowstone National Park serves as a model and inspiration for national parks throughout the world. The National Park Service preserves, unimpaired, these and other natural and cultural resources and values for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

Yellowstone Inventory

General

2.2M acres with 291 miles of boundary
8,000-foot average elevation
387 permanent, fulltime employees

Natural Resources

two-thirds of the world's geysers
10,000 hot springs, mud pots, and fumaroles
2,463 miles of rivers and streams
634 lakes and ponds
316 bird species
61 native mammals
11 native and 5 non-native fish
1,098 native and 197 non-native plants
406 species of geothermal microbes (1% of thermal areas inventoried)



Cultural Resources

1,100 known archeological sites
26 affiliated American Indian tribes
951 historic structures
6 National Historic Landmarks
379,441 museum objects
4.89 million archival documents
39 historic vehicles



Infrastructure

1,541 buildings, including 831 maintained by concessioners
454 housing units, including 68 trailers
9 visitor centers, museums, and contact stations
7 campgrounds operated by the NPS
7 amphitheaters
466 miles of paved and unpaved roads
184 miles groomed for oversnow use
61 bridges
1,000 miles of trails with 96 trailheads
52 picnic areas
8 major water and wastewater systems
870 units in fleet
3,000 tons of solid waste generated annually (13% recycled)
3,671 units of communications equipment